

**FRANS J. SCHUURMAN**

**Development Studies: Work in Progress**

**1. Introduction**

At the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s Development Studies was established in several European universities in the form of new academic institutes. Over time these institutes evolved from a highly differentiated amalgam consisting of leftist students and lecturers towards representatives of an established academic discipline. Lately, a number of these institutes are celebrating or are preparing to celebrate their 35 or 40 years of existence (like the IDS in the UK in 2006 and CIDIN in the Netherlands in 2008). It is interesting to notice that these celebrations are specifically dedicated to a critical introspection, which, in the case of the IDS, resulted in a conference entitled 'Reinventing Development Studies'. Furthermore, the Dutch CIDIN will use the celebration of its 35 years of existence to critically reflect upon the current status and future perspectives of Development Studies.

There are reasons enough for these introspective exercises. Firstly, there is an undeniable trend that academic institutes in general have to increasingly operate according to a market logic. Input and output in terms of the number of students, the amount of publications in peer-refereed top of the bill reviews, the yearly count of large-scale research projects, ratings indicating the academic prestige of universities, etc. are nowadays grudgingly accepted as part of academic survival. Secondly, this trend seems to stand in contradiction to the critical contents of the mission and scientific object of Development Studies. For example, it is increasingly difficult to find funds for development research which are either not directly related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) or which try to critically assess the whole MDG-related media circus. As such, thirdly, there is an increasing

influence of neo-liberal thinking on the research agenda of Development Studies, making it increasingly difficult to maintain a critical research tradition. Fourthly, although on the one hand the geographical scale of Development Studies research nowadays incorporates Eastern and Central European countries, on the other hand with respect to research in the traditional development countries the geographical focus seems to be reduced to Africa (also a consequence of the focus on the MDG-issues; if this trend continues we better might rename Development Studies 'Africanism'). Fifthly, but not lastly, globalization (whether as an ontological phenomenon and/or as a discourse) has significantly challenged Development Studies in many respects (cf. Schuurman 2001). In short, there are enough reasons to critically reflect upon the current status of Development Studies. I will first outline shortly the generic core characteristics of Development Studies and then give a highly subjective account of what the situation is with 1) critical theory in relation to the market logic which has penetrated academia, and 2) interdisciplinarity as one of the core characteristics of Development Studies. In the conclusion I will return to the current status of the core characteristics and the way forward.

## **2. Core Characteristics of Development Studies**

Development Studies has always been the Robin Hood of the social sciences. As a self-proclaimed ally in the emancipatory struggle of the poor, the oppressed, the marginalised, the exploited, the underdeveloped in the Third World, Development Studies took what it needed from 'the rich' social sciences (economy, sociology, anthropology and political science): paradigms, theories, concepts and methodologies. If need be, small marauding bands of Development Studies teachers and students were dropped behind the academic borders of even the technical sciences and departments of law to assemble relevant information. Of vital importance was the existence of a fifth column of development experts firmly embedded in the other fields of social science. In fact, this is how Development Studies started its academic life back in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Economists, sociologists, geographers and political scientists interested in studying the plight of the Third World got together and created an academic niche in their univer-

sities. Of course, at the time, the anti-modernisation *Zeitgeist* created a favorable circumstance which allowed this fledgling among the social sciences to grow to what Development Studies is nowadays with its own established (1 or 2 years) MA- and PhD-programs, sometimes combined with an independent BA.

Specifically because of its relatively recent emergence, the normativity of its research object and the interdisciplinary character of its scientific mission, Development Studies has always been the odd one out in academia but at the same time has always attracted enough students to be reckoned with. In addition, the number of students finding a job in the sector of development cooperation has always been more than acceptable in relation to, for example, students of anthropology which have a much more difficult time finding jobs which correspond with their academic training.

It did not take long for Development Studies to develop the following core characteristics:

*Normativity*: although there are many definitions of the core object of Development Studies, they share a rather strong and explicit value-laden content. It is about poverty, progress (however defined), emancipation, inequality, injustice, empowerment, etc.

*Interdisciplinarity*: a normative *explanandum* almost by definition requires an interdisciplinary approach. This is to be distinguished from a multi-disciplinary approach where an object is studied from different perspectives without combining the evolving insights to produce a surplus value.

*Emphasis on the role of the state*: there are two reasons for this characteristic. Firstly, as Development Studies emerged in a period where the welfare state was created in the North it incorporated the notion that the nation-state was the most important actor in creating development and progress. Secondly, Development Studies as such also copied this characteristic from the neighbouring social sciences with their 19<sup>th</sup> century heritage concerning the importance of the role of the (nation) state.

*A strong belief in the makeability of society*: this characteristic is a part of the Enlightenment heritage which characterizes the social sciences in general. Specifically the sub-discipline of development policy and management within Development Studies is a typical example of this characteristic.

*Comparative research*: traditionally Development Studies is involved with the comparison of geographical units (e.g. rich and poor countries with all the inherent dangers of teleology).

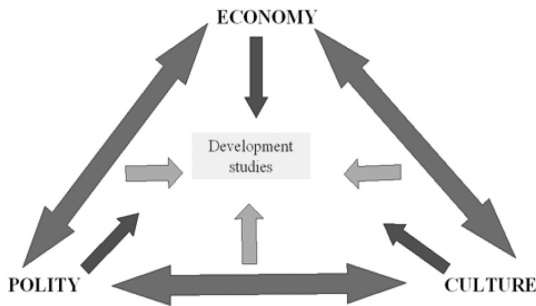
*A strong historical component*: understanding the reasons for the emergence and continuation of the lack of emancipation in the Third World in combination with a meaningful comparative research unavoidably involves historical research.

*Multi-level analysis*: the two previous characteristics are combined with a multi-level analysis where factors and actors or structure and agency at a macro, meso and micro level and their interactions are made visible and analysed.

All these generic characteristics of Development Studies have been involved since the 1960s in a dynamic process of change and adaptation. To get a grip on these changes it is helpful to distinguish four paradigmatic periods in the post-World War II era: modernisation, anti-modernisation, neo-liberalism and globalisation. These paradigmatic changes did not only affect Development Studies but the social sciences in general. It is important to point out that paradigms within the social sciences (and probably even in general) not only reflect the spirit of the time, but at the same time contribute to the formation of the *Zeitgeist* (Alexander 1995). In terms of paradigmatic changes, the post-WW II era, in contradistinction to pre-WW II times, is remarkable because of the relatively quick succession of these changes (every 10-15 years). New dynamics within and between technological, political, cultural, economic and military domains created such a flux at national and international levels that social sciences could hardly keep up to reflect upon this at a paradigmatic level. In the mid-1980s Development Studies moved into what became known as 'the impasse' (Booth 1985; Schuurman 1993) which need not be further elaborated here. The paradigmatic and theoretical flux that Development Studies entered into was reinforced by the combined appearance on the scene of 1) globalisation and 2) the entrance of market logic in academia. I would like to concentrate first specifically on the impact of globalisation on interdisciplinarity as well as on the role of space in the comparative method as core characteristics of Development Studies. Next I will pay attention to the effects of the market logic in academia on research and students in Development Studies.

### 3. Interdisciplinarity and the Role of Space in a Globalising World

Over time the interdisciplinarity of Development Studies has become one of its most important trademarks, which, besides the obvious advantages, also has its drawbacks. The big advantage is that the object of Development Studies is a major social problem (let's keep it simple for the moment: widespread poverty in the Third World) and social problems in general can only be studied adequately from an interdisciplinary perspective. These problems always have economic, political and socio-cultural aspects and also contextual influencing factors which interrelate them. It is specifically the attempt to take into account the interrelations between these aspects which makes Development Studies interdisciplinary. Just looking at a social problem from different disciplinary angles would make it multi- but not interdisciplinary.



The multidisciplinary angle in this triangle is represented by the small arrows from the three corners. The other, light gray, small arrows specifically represent the added value of an interdisciplinary approach. For example, if we study the developmental role of civil society organisations (which is one of the hot topics nowadays) and one does not take into account the influence on the characteristics of civil society of 1) the type of the political regime (e.g. whether it is a weak or a strong state) and 2) the influence of modes of production (the relative importance of and the interrelation between a capitalist and a non-capitalist mode of production), then only

a small part of the total picture can be captured. Another example would be the influence of the interrelation between characteristics of economic growth (e.g. in terms of inward- and outward orientation) and the democratic content of an evolving political regime on the developmental paths of countries. In short, interdisciplinarity is the strong point of Development Studies as it studies historic trajectories of underdevelopment.

The disadvantage of interdisciplinarity is that the training of students in the academic field of each of the major sciences which are reflected in the corner points of the interdisciplinary triangle (i.e. political science, economy and sociology) is sometimes considered insufficient as Development Studies tries to keep various balls in the air at the same time. Development Studies students are not economists, sociologists or political scientists *pur sang* yet they compensate for this lack of specific disciplinary knowledge with a better insight into the complexity of developmental problems. Yet, Development Studies is not infrequently seen as an applied science narrowed down to development policy and management. Looking at Development Studies from the outside, specifically given its problem-oriented object definition, it is to be expected that its focus seems to be on policy-oriented research, contributing to further developmental processes in the Third World. As such, Development Studies is sometimes looked at by the other branches of social sciences as lacking in academic status, also because of its interdisciplinary character, as discussed above. It is, however, a common mistake to reduce Development Studies to development policy and management, thereby emphasising an empiricist and solution-oriented approach to the problem of underdevelopment. The object of Development Studies is much broader, i.e. it takes as its *explanandum* the structural causes of the lack of emancipation of people in the South as well as in transitional economies elsewhere and the strategies (at a local, national and international scale) which are employed to solve this lack of emancipation. A lack of emancipation refers to an inadequate access to material (e.g. income) and immaterial (e.g. education) resources, which leads to widespread poverty, exploitation, inequality and injustice. The emphasis on structural causes does not imply just a structuralist approach but combines this with actor-oriented perspectives in order not to lose sight of the actors' views. Strategies to solve the lack of emancipation involve various actors in the South as well as in the North: social movements, NGOs, and national and international Governmental

Organisations. Of course, this is a subjective definition of Development Studies but one which I feel does more justice to what Development Studies is all about without reducing it to development policy and management.

A recent addition to the geographical scale of Development Studies shows that besides countries in the South and transitional economies in, for example, former Eastern Europe, the emancipatory problems in multicultural societies in the North are also increasingly incorporated into the object of Development Studies. Students of Development Studies are very much interested in the emancipatory problems related to multiculturalism in their own societies. In this case also, an interdisciplinary approach is the most awarding.

Nevertheless, the (short) history of Development Studies reflects a dialectical relationship between the advantages and disadvantages of an interdisciplinary approach. In the first place, climbing over the fence of the neighbouring sciences can lead to muddy feet. The paradigms and theories which are 'imported' from the three major social science disciplines (economy, political science and sociology) could for a long time only be fruitfully combined by Development Studies because of their common denominator, which is the linch-pin behind such interdisciplinarity, i.e. the role of the (nation) state. The bulk of the paradigms and theories from these three major domains of the social sciences have their roots in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with an emphasis on the role of the (nation) state in, respectively, the establishment of national markets and international trade relations, the establishment of democratic governments, and the aim of these governments to create a national identity (thereby suppressing other forms of identity based, for example, on regional or religious affiliations). In short, Development Studies' interdisciplinarity reflected right from the start the 19<sup>th</sup> century roots of other social sciences with the nation-state as the main actor in development processes and as the main geographical referent.

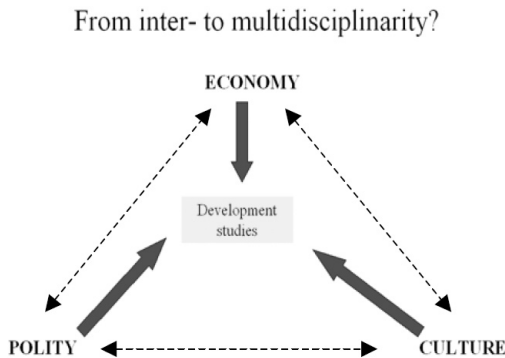
These paradigmatic views on the role of the (nation) state have changed as we move closer to the so-called global era. Globalisation challenges the interdisciplinary character of Development Studies. Many globalisation authors agree on the decreasing, or at least changing, economic, political and cultural importance of (nation) states. A shift in analytical perspective from the nation-state to transnational social space does not make it any easier for the interdisciplinary approach of Development Studies. On the other

hand, the 'global-local' as the new binary has surplus value above the established dichotomies of core-periphery and developed-underdeveloped exactly because it is less spatial and allows for inequality within the binary code. Leo Ching (2000) speculates that under globalisation traditional binary models of social analysis and political struggle (coloniser-colonised, First World-Third World, centre-periphery) are inapplicable to a spatial economy of power irreducible to geographical dichotomies. In the same line Appadurai is in favour of a 'process' geography instead of a 'trait' geography which considers areas as relatively immobile aggregates of traits (values, languages, material practices, ecological adaptations, marriage patterns, etc.) with more or less durable boundaries. A process geography sees areas as precipitates of various kinds of action, interaction and motion (trade, travel, warfare, colonisation, exile, etc.). Current area studies, says Appadurai, consider areas as permanent associations between space, territory and cultural organization. It is not only that the globalisation debate gives reason to suppose that the role of the (nation) state has been and still is declining but also that, as a consequence, the former conjunctive dynamic (i.e. following the same spatial and time paths) of economy, polity and culture – upon which the interdisciplinary character of many a development theory was based – has been replaced by a disjunctive dynamic (Appadurai 1990, 2000).

To get to grips with an increasingly deterritorialised world, where relations between time and space are no longer bound within the borders of a nation-state, Appadurai introduces his notion of 'scapes': global configurations of flows within a certain networked environment. He introduces the 'ethnoscape' (a 'landscape' consisting of tourists, immigrants, refugees, etc.), the 'technoscape' (the global configuration of technological flows), the 'financescape' (global flows of various forms of financial capital), the 'mediascape' (a global network in which information dissemination and the creation of images and narratives are concentrated), and the 'ideoscape' (simply put networks of pro- and anti-state ideologies). The crucial point Appadurai makes is that these post-territorial scapes, even if they are inter-related in a 'glocal' (global/local) context, follow their own time-space trajectories. Basically this means that under globalisation the political, economic and socio-cultural domains increasingly follow their own time-space paths; whatever interconnecting logic is left is not bound within the nation-state context. If Appadurai's notion of disjunctive domains is a fruitful approach



then the interdisciplinarity of Development Studies would probably have to be replaced by a more multi-disciplinary approach which looks as follows:



In a deterritorialised world the nation-state would have lost its role as a connecting linch-pin between the economic, political and cultural domains which now largely follow their own disjunctive dynamics which are only partly interrelated (indicated by the dotted arrows). The traditional interdisciplinary approach of development theories which, for example, used to draw upon the interrelation between national economic growth and processes of democratisation through the role of the (nation) state is now confronted with domains which follow different logics that are not necessarily interrelated as they form part of different transnational scapes. For the time being Development Studies seems obliged to move towards a multidisciplinary approach (i.e. without a clear theoretical view of the interrelations between the economic, political and cultural domains) which at the same time poses a new challenge. In addition, the normativity and the policy-orientation of its *explanandum* require some answers in this respect.

Considering specifically the spatial element in development research, Saskia Sassen (2000a, 2000b) stresses the increasing importance of urban-oriented research because world or global cities (also in the Third World) form the key nodes in a physical and digital space according to a logic which knows no national boundaries.

There is a growing awareness that geographical space does not play the role that it used to. Specifically for Development Studies this leads to the following questions.

First, if nation-states are of declining importance in offering a framework to understand and theorise social, cultural, political and economic dynamics, is there a *remplaçant* necessary and if so what will that be? World regions as Hettne (1999) proposes, network societies following Castells (1996), the world cities as suggested by Sassen or is the idea of social spaces fruitful as Robinson (2001a, 2001b) puts forward?

Second, if geographical space is of declining importance what does this mean for the comparative method which in Development Studies has traditionally meant above all comparison between nation-states, i.e. what does one compare in the global age to understand (under)development: social spaces, nodes within networks or world regions?

Robinson is convinced that the 'new locus of development processes is emergent transnational social spaces'. He finds no theoretical reason to give primacy to the nation-state as the particular territorial expression of uneven development. Concepts like centre and periphery should be reconceived in terms of global social groups. In an increasingly interconnected world time is annihilating space and unevenness resulting from that process should as such not be understood in geographical terms; for some this would mean the end of geography. Manuel Castells also stresses the annihilation of space through time, but does not replace geographical space with social space but with digital space, i.e. the network society. For the comparative method this would mean focussing on nodes in networks in terms of their location in digital space. It would be the ultimate consequence of David Harvey's 'space-time compression' image of globalisation (Harvey 1989). If these interpretations of globalisation bear any analytical weight then the traditional trusted comparative method in Development Studies would urgently need a revision. Also in politico-ideological terms this would mean a shift of focus within Development Studies. According to Fred Block (2001) the position, which Robinson takes, would, for example, mean that subordinate classes, instead of opposing their own national bourgeoisie should now have to transnationalise and confront the new transnational bourgeoisie, a strategy which Block, by the way, finds rather premature (on this debate see also McMichael 2001; Robinson 2001c).

However, it is not at all clear to what extent the nation-state as a political, economic and socio-cultural actor and/or frame of reference has lost its previous importance (Schoorman 2001). The characteristics and functions of the nation-state have been significantly changed, no doubt, within the political, economic and socio-cultural domains. But it seems too soon to get rid of the nation-state and declare a moratorium on the importance of geography at the same time. Even Robinson (2001b: 558) himself sees that ‘...some zones are selected for global production activities, others assigned “feeder roles” (e.g. labour or raw materials), and still others marginalised entirely from the global economy (the so-called “fourth world”)’. This in fact would open interesting perspectives on the relation between physical space, social space and digital space. The marginal position of some groups is connected with them being locked into physical space, as it were, not being able to enjoy the advantages of access to digital space which has become the privilege of the global elites. These global elites appear as primary nodes in the global network society without necessarily sharing a physical space. Nevertheless, reality shows that there are in fact spatial concentrations of these global elites (in global cities or regions) which would still allow for an important role of physical space in constructing either defensive mechanisms (‘Fortress Europe’) or providing a battlefield where warlords set the world in flames.

Understanding globalisation in terms of a dialectical relation between ‘the global’ and ‘the local’ would greatly facilitate a correct understanding of the role of physical space in the global era. Henry Yeung (1999) emphasizes that although ‘the global’ invades local contexts of actions, it does not destroy them; instead, new forms of local resistance and local expressions emerge, reinforcing the interconnectedness of the local and the global and the multiplicity of hybridisation of social life on every spatial scale. Yeung, in contrast to the ultra-globalists, sees a significant national diversity in the face of global capitalism. Even Sassen (2000a, 2000b) declares that even the most globalized and dematerialized business sectors, such as global finance, inhabit both physical and digital space. These activities are simultaneously partly deterritorialised and partly deeply territorialised, spanning the globe, yet strategically concentrated in specific places.

Still, the increasing interconnectedness at a global scale, the increase in the importance of digital space, the changing (perhaps not decreasing)

role of the nation-state, the emergence of a transnational class, the growth of a global economy as materializing in a worldwide grid of strategic places leading to a new economic geography of centrality – all this new global dynamic cannot bypass development research and in particular not Development Studies without stirring up important discussions on the status of physical space and the comparative method.

#### **4. The Market Logic in Academia and Critical Theory**

What does it mean for a Development Studies institute to be functioning in an academic setting, which is increasingly being invaded by a market logic? As mentioned before, in the current academic climate what is considered as important is: size (number of PhDs and staff, number of publications, amount of students), large-scale research projects (preferably in combination with large quantitative data banks) in combination with outside funding (an indication apparently of the relevance of the research activities and at the same time thankfully appreciated by the financial bureaucracy of the university), and the amount of evaluation missions (on behalf of the Ministry of International Development Cooperation and/or non-governmental development organizations in the Northern countries). In practice this means for Development Studies institutes that in order to survive concessions have to be made. Original mission statements, which were strongly normatively inspired, increasingly started to act as barriers in the survival strategy. For example, when the current Centre for International Development Issues (CIDIN) of the Radboud University in Nijmegen (the Netherlands) started functioning in 1973 as the Third World Centre, one of the first publications concerned the negative role of multinationals in maintaining poverty-related issues in the Third World. The name of Third World Centre was changed into CIDIN in the year 2000 as the term Third World was considered outdated and in the Dutch academic collective memory too much connected to 'Third Worldism'. Currently, one of the research projects of CIDIN concerns the measurement of the efficiency and impact of development projects (in collaboration with a Dutch NGO which is financing this research). The purpose of this project is to deliver academically sound advice to NGOs to improve their project efficiency and

impact. In the 1970s, a common view in Development Studies circles was that development projects were an extension of Northern based imperialism (a basic view of 'Third Worldists' or 'TierMondistas') or at the most a way to evade more fundamental changes in North-South trade relations and political regimes in underdeveloped countries themselves. There is in fact little reason to believe that current development cooperation has changed dramatically in its implicit intentions.

Maybe this is an extreme example, yet it shows a number of dramatic shifts that Development Studies went through in terms of its *explanandum* (object), *explanans* (explanatory framework) and subject (methodology). In terms of its object, Development Studies (at least in this example but I venture that it is a general characteristic) went from a structural analysis of the mechanics of underdevelopment to studying the efficiency of development projects (Harriss 2002). In this shift an approach inspired by critical theory was entirely lost. In fact, in general the adjective 'critical' lost its original meaning. Many Development Studies students nowadays interpret 'critical' only in the dictionary sense of the word. In addition, the example also shows that there is an historic shift (not only in Development Studies but also in social sciences in general) from structural analysis to actor-oriented analysis. Studying and/or evaluating development projects in terms of efficiency and impact means a shift from macro- to micro-level analysis. Now, there is nothing wrong with actor-oriented analysis as long as the structural context is not lost from sight. But this is exactly the point; the broader context in project-based evaluation studies remains often outside the analytical framework (partly also because it falls outside the sphere of influence of the NGOs which finance these studies in the first place).

Another example of the shift within Development Studies from structural to actor-oriented analysis is the way that concepts like poverty and inequality are looked at. We see here a historic shift in the level of analysis from macro to meso to micro. Poverty in the Third World used to be conceptualised in terms of differences between rich and poor countries. Admittedly, the definition of poverty has been much improved through the years (from a purely income-oriented definition to a much broader set of indicators) but poverty is now often brought down to an individual characteristic with individual solutions (e.g. through micro-credit schemes). This trend is also reflected in analytical frameworks like, for example, the

currently much favored livelihood approaches where individual actors are plotted into a matrix according to their access (or lack thereof) to assets or different forms of capital (financial, social, human, etc.). Now, the livelihood framework is very useful to point out the heterogeneity existing within a particular local space, something which has always been a notoriously weak point in critical theory. But this can hardly compensate for the lack of an analysis of more structural components. In other words, the shift within Development Studies from research inspired by critical theory to research according to a neo-liberal agenda is accompanied by dramatic shifts in object, subject and explanatory framework.

Now the above probably are nothing more than the grumblings of an old Development Studies dinosaur. So let me turn to these issues from the student's point of view (i.e. more precisely: my perspective on their perspective). Development Studies still attracts a sufficient number of students. The reasons for studying Development Studies have not changed over the years. It is a genuine concern for the plight of the poor in the Third World, indignation about the unequal distribution of resources on a global scale and the urge to do something about this. Students also are still very active outside the university, although the characteristics of their activities have changed somewhat. In the 'old days' students joined anti-imperialism working groups and as such were well equipped with theoretical knowledge which enabled them to discuss Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire* on the same level with their professors. Nowadays students join United Nations Youth Fora and travel to Washington to meet their peers from other countries to discuss good governance. So, extra-curricula activities still are there and still express a basic concern with the 'Other' which goes beyond studying at the university. In fact, these activities could be more appreciated than in the old days because a lot of students are working about 20 hours per week to earn their livelihood. The job market for Development Studies students is still largely composed of employment in the domain of international development cooperation, although, significantly less than before, this means being sent overseas. Only a small percentage manages to proceed to writing a PhD thesis. Although I mentioned earlier that Development Studies should not be reduced to development management and policy the reality is that a lot of the students end up in Ministries of Development Cooperation, NGOs, embassies or international development organisations which do nothing else

than development management and policy-making. Here we have another reason why critical theory came increasingly under pressure, i.e. not only as a framework for research but also because of the knowledge required by future employers of Development Studies students. Of course the job market wants critical students but more in a generalised academic sense of the word. There is a need for students who know how to prepare, manage and evaluate development projects, who know how to measure efficiency and increase the impact of projects. The job market does not need students who think that the Millennium Development Goals are the latest example of the depoliticisation of the development debate. All this does not mean the students are ignorant of what critical theory is, but it seems to be more considered as something of the past than of any immediate use in research projects or in future jobs. Besides, by now every European university has implemented the Bologna Treaty, which means that officially the academic period for students consists of a 3-year BA followed by a 1-year MA. Time for fieldwork is limited which means that students need a pragmatic 'toolkit' for local level research. Critical theory is rather abstract and needs a lot of operationalisation to be used in short term micro-level MA-research projects. It can be considered as a major challenge for Development Studies to try to reincorporate critical theory into that pragmatic toolkit.

## **5. Conclusion: Development Studies as 'Work in Progress'**

So, what does the above mean for the core characteristics of Development Studies as well as for critical theory? Again, a rather subjective enlistment of consequences is the following:

*Normativity*: the rather strong and explicit value-laden content of the core object of Development Studies (inequality, injustice, etc.) has been replaced by a poverty concept which, although defined in a multidimensional way, seems to be increasingly, if not already exclusively, applied at the individual level. Efficiency and impact seem to be considered more important than injustice.

*Interdisciplinarity*: as explained above, this core characteristic is shifting towards a multi-disciplinary approach in research as well as in academic training.

*Emphasis on the role of the state:* this has been substituted for concepts like good governance, co-production, public-private enterprises, etc. Although still important the state is no longer considered the hegemonic actor in development processes.

*A strong belief in the makeability of society:* the concept of risk society has increasingly captured the minds of policy makers and scientists. Especially as far as the global climate is concerned, it is the containment of risk which is at stake. As such, the neo-liberal solution seems to be that private insurance against risks in general is also possible for the poor in the Third World.

*Comparative research:* traditional country-wise comparisons are replaced by research projects at a local level or comparisons between social groups in a so-called transnational context (e.g. migration studies).

*A strong historical component:* this has been replaced by much more emphasis on the 'here and now'.

*Multi-level analysis:* a combination of the above changes has led away from a multi-level towards a mono-level analysis. Structural analysis with a strong historical element is increasingly replaced by an actor-oriented approach.

Development Studies is still, perhaps more than ever, 'work in progress'. We are in more need than ever of analytical schemes to understand what is going on in the world, how globalisation produces inequality (the role of digital, physical and social space), what strategies subaltern classes could follow to gather their strength, and what exactly the emancipatory spaces are in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. There is reason enough to try and find our way back to critical theory and that quest might well take us towards a sort of neo-dependency paradigm. We have learned from the past what a static and rigid structural or actor-oriented approach can do to our understanding of reality but we have also seen how the backbone of critical theory was often formed by exactly these kinds of dependency approaches. Development Studies should not be afraid to reassert in the *explanandum* and the *explanans* of its discipline a normative approach in development research; an approach where inequality, progress and the role of the state still find a place next to concepts like diversity, risk management and livelihood strategies of individual actors. The challenge is to incorporate these concepts in a critical theory which reflects the economic, political and socio-cultural realities of



globalisation. If globalisation is about an increasingly interconnected world, what would be more suitable than a neo-dependency kind of theory to critically analyse how capitalism and modernity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have found new ways to proceed and have created new patterns of inequalities and new conflicts? It is, however, to be recommended that the previously mentioned contentious issues be incorporated in such a new paradigmatic approach to the reality of the global age.

## References

- Alexander, Jeffrey (1995): *Fin de Siecle Social Theory. Relativism, Reduction, and the Problem of Reason*. London: Verso.
- Appadurai, Arjun (1990): Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy. In: *Public Culture* 2 (2), 1-24.
- Appadurai, Arjun (2000): Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination. In: *Public Culture* 12 (1), 1-19.
- Block, Fred (2001): Using Social Theory to Leap over Historical Contingencies: A Comment on Robinson. In: *Theory and Society* 30 (2), 215-221.
- Booth, David (1985): Marxism and Development Sociology: Interpreting the Impasse. In: *World Development* 13 (7), 761-787.
- Castells, Manuel (1996): *The Rise of the Network Society*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Ching, Leo (2000): Globalizing the Regional, Regionalizing the Global: Mass Culture and Asianism in the Age of Late Capital. In: *Public Culture* 12 (1), 233-257.
- Harriss, John (2002): *Depoliticizing Development. The World Bank and Social Capital*. London: Anthem Press.
- Harvey, David (1989): *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hettne, Bjorn (1999): Globalization and the New Regionalism: The Second Great Transformation. In: Hettne, Bjorn/Inotai, András/Sunkel, Osvaldo (eds.): *Globalism and the New Regionalism*. Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1-24.
- McMichael, Philip (2001): Revisiting the Question of the Transnational State: A Comment on William Robinson's 'Social theory and globalization'. In: *Theory and Society* 30 (2), 201-210.
- Robinson, William (2001a): Social Theory and Globalisation: The Rise of a Transnational State. In: *Theory and Society* 30 (2), 157-200.
- Robinson, William (2001b): Transnational processes, Development Studies and Changing Social Hierarchies in the World System: a Central American Case Study. In: *Third World Quarterly* 22 (4), 529-563.
- Robinson, William (2001c): Response to McMichael, Block and Goldfrank. In: *Theory and Society* 30 (2), 223-236.

- Sassen, Saskia (2000a): Spatialities and Temporalities of the Global: Elements for a Theorization. In: *Public Culture* 12 (1), 215-232.
- Sassen, Saskia (2000b): New Frontiers Facing Urban Sociology at the Millennium. In: *British Journal of Sociology* 51 (1), 143-160.
- Schuurman, Frans J. (1993): *Beyond the Impasse. New Directions in Development Theory*. London: Zed Books.
- Schuurman, Frans J. (2001): *Globalization and Development Studies. Challenges for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. London: Sage.
- Yeung, Henry (1999): Under Siege? Economic Globalisation and Chinese Business in Southeast Asia. In: *Economy and Society* 28 (1), 1-29.

## Abstracts

Since the establishment of Development Studies at several European universities at the end of the 1960s, these institutes evolved from an amalgam of left-inclined students and professors towards representatives of an established academic discipline. The author critically reflects upon the transformations that have taken place over that period. In doing so, he first outlines the foundational characteristics of Development Studies and then gives a subjective account of the current situation. In his view, contemporary Development Studies are challenged by 1) a market logic which has penetrated academia and stands in a contradiction to the critical contents of Development Studies and 2) the material and discursive processes of globalisation which require a shift in analytical perspective, disciplinary approach and methods. When addressing the future perspectives of Development Studies in the concluding part, the author argues for a return to a critical research tradition. Critical theory within Development Studies should incorporate new analytical schemes to analyse the economic, political and socio-cultural realities of globalisation. At the same time, Development Studies should not be afraid to reassert a normative approach. That quest might well take us towards a sort of neo-dependency paradigm.

Die seit Ende der 1960er Jahre an zahlreichen europäischen Universitäten gegründeten Institute für Entwicklungsfragen wurden aus Sammelpunkten zumeist linker StudentInnen und ProfessorInnen zu Repräsentanten einer etablierten akademischen Disziplin. Der Autor geht

den Veränderungen nach, die diesen Bereich im Lauf der Zeit geprägt haben. Zu Beginn skizziert er jene grundlegenden Merkmale, die die Anfänge der Entwicklungsforschung prägten. In der gegenwärtigen Situation sieht er das Studien- und Forschungsfeld vor zwei Herausforderungen gestellt: Erstens steht die Marktlogik, die in das akademische Terrain eingedrungen ist, im Widerspruch zum kritischen Gehalt der Entwicklungsforschung; zweitens erfordern die durch die Globalisierung materiell und diskursiv erzeugten Transformationen eine Veränderung der analytischen Perspektive, der disziplinären Herangehensweise und der Methoden. Im abschließenden Teil begibt sich der Autor auf die Suche nach den Zukunftsperspektiven. Eine kritische Entwicklungstheorie muss demnach neue Analysemethoden integrieren, mit denen die wirtschaftlichen, politischen und soziokulturellen Realitäten der Globalisierung erfasst werden können. Gleichzeitig sollte Entwicklungsforschung sich auf ihre kritische Tradition besinnen und ihren normativen Anspruch nicht aufgeben. Als Ergebnis dieser Bemühungen könnte so etwas wie ein Neo-Dependenzparadigma entstehen.

Frans J. Schuurman  
Centre for International Development Issues Nijmegen (CIDIN)  
Radboud University Nijmegen  
P.O. Box 9104  
6500 HE Nijmegen, The Netherlands  
f.schuurman@maw.ru.nl